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Papered March 1828

An  
Inaugural  
Essay  
on  
Acute Hepatitis  
By  
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of  
Virginia

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Acute Hepatitis is defined by Doct Cullen  
Fever, tension and pain, either pungent  
or obtuse, of the right hypochondrium, pain  
at the clavicle and tip of the right  
shoulder, the patient lying with difficulty  
on the left side, dyspnoea, a dry cough,  
vomiting and hiccups

All of these symptoms, are rarely met with  
in the same case. When the dyspnoea and  
cough are considerable for instance, there is  
generally no vomiting; and when there is fre-  
quent vomiting, the patient is seldom trou-  
bled with a great degree of dyspnoea, and  
still more rarely with a cough. This mis-  
takes, however, to mention in the definition of  
hepatitis, symptoms which only occasionally  
attend, because the constant symptoms of  
this complaint are not sufficient to distinguish  
it. On this account some have ranked among

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the diagnostic symptoms of hepatitis those of jaundice, but their presence is not sufficiently frequent to assist much in the diagnosis.

Like other inflammations, hepatitis makes its attack more or less suddenly, the patient sometimes complaining of a tightness about the precordia, accompanied with a degree of anxiety and fever, for sometime before the symptoms peculiar to the complaint shew themselves; at other times the pain in the region of the liver being among the first symptoms - in either case the accession is frequently attended with some degree of cold. The chief diagnostic symptoms of this complaint are, the seat, and kind of pain which attend it.

The acute hepatitis is almost always attended with a pain in the right hypochondrium, which is sometimes shooting, accompanied with a sense of tension in the part; in some cases it

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is constant and severe, in other deep seated and  
obtuse. - The pain, however, is not confined to  
the region of the liver; it extends to the breast,  
clavicle and shoulder of the right side, and in  
the part is often more acute than in the seat  
of the disease. The pain of the hypochondrium  
is increased on pressure, especially when the  
position of the body is such as to relax the  
abdominal muscles -

Practitioners have been at some pains to de-  
termine what part of the liver is affected in  
different cases of hepatitis. When the pain  
extends to the clavicle and chest, the convex  
part has been found most frequently affected  
when it is much increased on pressure, the  
interior part of the liver is the chief seat  
of the disease. When the pain extends high-  
ly to the region of the stomach, and is not  
much increased on pressure of the right

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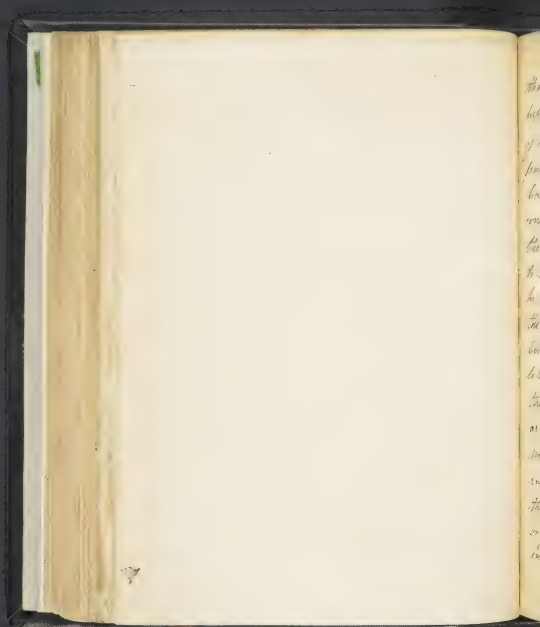
hypochondrium, there is then reason to believe that the inflammation chiefly occupies the concave part, in which case the pain sometimes extends to the abdominal muscles, the complaint has been mistaken for an inflammation of them.

In this, as in other visceral inflammations, the kind of pain has been supposed to point out whether the membrane or parenchyma is the seat of this disease; in the former case the pain being acute, in the latter obtuse. This observation, however, is not to be depended upon. It has been observed by some, that when pain of the shoulder attends hepatitis, its seat generally corresponds with the part of the liver most affected, being anterior or posterior, according as the anterior or posterior parts of the liver are the seats of the disease. When inflammation at a

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stiches the left lobe, the pain is often in the  
left shoulder others say that it is sometimes in  
both scapulae, and now and then felt in  
the left side under the lower false ribs. It is  
generally most severe when the patient lies on  
the left side; sometimes though rarely, when on  
the right side; in many cases he finds him-  
self easiest on the back, with the head low.  
The pain of the side, as well as the shoulder  
is often increased during inspiration, which  
is impeded by it. as might be supposed, it  
is most so when the parts nearest the dia-  
phragm are inflamed; it is in these cases  
that the cough which accompanies  
this complaint is most severe, and that he-  
cups most frequently supervenes.

The cough is generally short, dry, and fre-  
quent, and the thick mucus which is never a  
favourable symptom; is sometimes a violent



that materially, in <sup>it</sup> ~~its~~ respiration. When  
hepatitis is attended with cough and a distinct  
of breathing it may be easily mistaken for  
pneumonia; dissections have however shewn this to  
have happened frequently. When the  
convex surface of the liver is much inflamed  
the inflammation sometimes, actually, shews  
to the ophthalmoscopy and even to the lungs.  
In inflammation of this part of the liver  
the external swelling is often considerable,  
but the inflammation is seldom communicated  
to the skin. When the concave part is affected  
the stomach partakes of the disorder as much  
as the lungs do in the former case, the  
nausea and vomiting being more urgent than  
in the other forms of hepatitis, and here  
the cough and dyspnoea are either wanting  
or present in a much less degree. In most  
instances the secretion of bile is increased?

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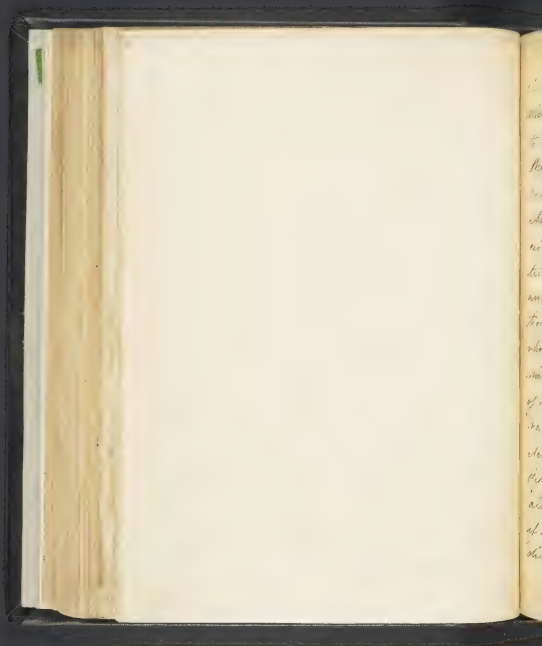
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and it sometimes happens, that its flow into  
the intestines is: increased: generally, perhaps  
by a contraction of the ducts - The veins, white  
of the eyes, and nose are then tinged with  
yellow as in jaundice

Inflammation of this part of the liver  
also is generally attended with the same anx-  
iety and debility, though perhaps generally  
in a less degree, which attends gastritis,  
from which it is often difficult to distinguish  
it. The truth is, that although there are  
many cases of pneumonia, gastritis, and  
hepatitis, in which the characteristic  
symptoms of each being distinct, there  
can be no doubt respecting the seat of  
the disease, yet, from the vicinity of the  
lungs, liver, and stomach, the symptoms  
of these parts, are confounded with which the  
precise seat of disease, seems as uncertain.

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above all, the tendency of inflammation to spread to neighbouring parts, these complaints are sometimes confounded, &c. the most obdurate. The pulse, when the concave part of the liver is affected, is often small and feeble; in other cases it is so weak, strong, in all, hard. - The urine whether tinged with bile or not, is generally high coloured, the heat and thirst considerable, the mouth dry, and the tongue covered with a white yellowish crust, which in the progress of the disease often assumes a dark, or even a black colour. The strength is reduced by constant wasting; and delirium sometimes, though not frequently, supervenes. In some cases the bowels are costive, in others a diarrhoea comes on, with griping pains, and bilious stools. The tendency to resolution, as of other



Similar complaints is known by the general mildness of the symptoms, and their yielding to the proper remedies, particularly by their being attended by spasms, cough, hiccup, vomiting, diarrhoea or delirium. As in other febrile diseases there are certain symptoms which frequently attend the favourable termination of hepatitis, and among these are hemorrhages, particularly those from the nose and hemorrhoidal vessels. Hepatitis is sometimes terminated by sweat. An increased secretion of mucus from the lungs is also to be ranked among the crisis of this complaint. A serious discharge of high coloured mucus depositing a red or whitish sediment is also a favourable symptom, particularly if it appears in the early stages of the disease. When hepatitis is terminated

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by resolution, is generally within four or five days; and if it last to the seventh or eighth day, it often terminates in suppuration. Resolution is the only termination of hepatitis which can be regarded as favourable, although suppuration is upon the whole, less fatal here than in most other visceral inflammations. There are few of the viscera in which inflammation is more apt to run to suppuration than the liver.

As soon as suppuration takes place, the pain ceases, and there is generally a sense of weight and pulsation in the region of the liver, the former being increased by lying on the left side. There is also in this stage of the disease frequent shiverings, at length hectic fever. In many cases there is an excellent tumor

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and fluctuation may be readily felt. The danger from suppuration in hepatitis depends much upon the seat of the abscess. The abscess, though very rarely, sometimes terminates in gangrene, and the tendency to it is known by an unusual violence of the symptoms, rapidly increasing, and not yielding to the proper remedies. When gangrene has actually supervened, the inflammatory symptoms subside suddenly, cold sweats supervening, and the pulse becoming weak and fluttering; with constant sickness and cold extremities.

### Causes

Hepatitis is more frequent in the warm than in the cold or temperate climates - It is more apt to attack those of a choleric and melan-  
cholic temperament, and it has been re-

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marked. but adults are ~~more~~ more subject to it than those under puberty. Among the most frequent causes of hepatitis may be ranked contusions, especially such as occasion a fracture of the cranium. Blows or contusions on other parts of the head, however often excite this disease. Violent passions of the mind, particularly ~~and~~ the depressing passions, are to be ranked among the causes of hepatitis. The constant application of a great degree of heat in any form, especially the rays of a vertical sun on the head, is a frequent cause of hepatitis. The venereals which are frequently formed in the gale bladder and ducts may be mentioned among the causes of hepatitis. Like other inflammatory diseases it often arises from the suppression of some habitual <sup>excretion</sup>, particularly from that of the hemorrhoids.

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## Treatment

The treatment of hepatitis so nearly resembles, that of other inflammatory diseases, that it <sup>will</sup> not be necessary to speak of it at length. Blood letting should be early resorted to, and its extent adapted to the greater or less violence of the inflammatory symptoms, always bearing in mind the great tendency of this disease to suppuration. When the pulse is hard and the pain urgent, blood letting may be had recourse to at any period of the disease without regard to the day. Cathartics are employed with great advantage in hepatitis, saline cathartics largely diluted, have been greatly recommended in this disease, but mercurial cathartics seem better adapted to this disease than any others. The local remedies and the mode of employing them, are the same as in other visceral inflammation. Blisters should be had recourse to as soon



as the high action of the blood vessels is sufficiently reduced to insure their beneficial effects, local bloodletting when the strength is too much reduced to admit of general bleeding, by means of cupping glasses or leeches may be resorted to, and there too, may be used with great advantage in the early stage of this disease.

